

THE REAL PRESENCE,
AND
THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

BY
Ἱερὺς.

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PREFACE.

THE following pages can hardly fail to offend some into whose hands this little book may fall.

For anything in them that is said harshly, unnecessarily, or unworthily of the subject, the writer must justly accept the blame.

- Those who fear God will surely not reject the obligation to search reverently, and to weigh solemnly, the Scriptures, to which appeal will be made in support of statements that may perhaps contradict the cumulative authority of a thousand human traditions.

True faith is credulous in things Divine—only when GOD speaks.

THE REAL PRESENCE,

AND

The Royal Priesthood.



CHAPTER I.

THE SHADOW OF THE SUBSTANCE.

THERE was once a priesthood upon earth. Its qualifications, its privileges, and its duties were all laid down to the minutest particular, and all appointed by revelation from God Himself.

Birth was the indispensable qualification. Nothing else could give admission. A man might attain by talent, power, or prowess to any other eminence on earth, but he could not be a priest unless he were of the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron.

The worship of Jehovah in the tabernacle or in the temple was the duty and the privilege of this family of priests. Their worship was ritualistic or ceremonial. Ceremonial in religious worship is of no value except in so far as it contains a

meaning. This ritual is therefore described in the epistle to the Hebrews as being the shadow of a coming reality.

Now a shadow implies a substance ; every line of it must be a reflection. It is impossible to alter it in a hair's-breadth except by altering its substance.

Thus all the gorgeous ritual of the tabernacle was prescribed by divine revelation, from the slaughter of every sacrifice to the hem of the priestly robe, or the fraction of an ounce weight in the composition of the sacred incense. The divine eye alone saw the substance, and represented it on earth, as we are told, not by an image, which might have left some room for variation in roundness or colouring from man's imagination, but by the very shadow of the original accurately revealed to divinely enlightened minds. Any innovation upon the prescribed order of service was forbidden under penalty of death.

It might seem an unimportant matter for Nadab and Abihu to have kindled their censers at a flame that had not come from the altar, but their immediate and terrible punishment showed God's view of their guilt.

In the New Testament we are taught that the substance of all these shadows has come. In the epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, the Holy Spirit makes them pass before us, and then raises

our gaze to the realities themselves in all the fulness of their accomplishment.

If then the shadowy and typical service allowed of no variation from divine arrangement in the slightest particular, how much more must the reality be sacred against any intrusion of man's imagination, or the wilful preservation of any shred of those shadows which the Holy Spirit Himself has rolled away!

Let us then reverently draw near and see what great things God has prepared for these days—things which eye saw not, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, but which God hath revealed to us by His Spirit.

What then are the corresponding realities to these ancient ceremonial shadows?

There is indeed a tabernacle, and there is indeed a priesthood. But that tabernacle is in heaven, and the priests who minister therein are not of earthly appointment. They are not admitted to their office by human ordination, any more than were their representatives, the sons of Aaron.

As with the sons of Aaron, the only way of admission to this holy office is by birth. They were the sons of Aaron.

These must be the sons of God.

Jeroboam might ordain a spurious and illegitimate priesthood after the manner of the surrounding heathen, but they could not enter the temple

or touch the holy things, however they might deceive themselves, or their master, by their imitations of Aaronic service.

Now, men may lay their hands on their fellows, and so authorize them to perform certain conventional ceremonies on earth varying according to nation and creed ; but all the hierarchies in the world could not confer on any being privileges which attach to birth alone. Admission to such an order is the sole prerogative of the Creator, and needs the exercise of His creative power. (1 Peter i. 2, 3 ; ii. 5.)

Every one therefore who in this dispensation is born again by believing in the witness of God concerning His Son is a priest by the divine right of that birth, and as such he is charged to perform priestly functions. He must be an offerer. He is to bring spiritual sacrifices.

In the tabernacle or temple of old, each priest exercised his own functions. He could not do so by another. So in the Christian assembly each must be a worshipper ; otherwise they do not come together in the full freedom and prerogative of true priesthood. And as of old there was no service so high as that which was fulfilled by the priests of Israel, so now there is no service so high, either on earth or heaven, rendered by created being, as the spiritual sacrifice offered by saved sinners, when, as a company of priests, they

meet to bring their offerings to God ; for while the locality of their gathering together is upon earth, their service can only be offered in the holiest place in heaven (Heb. x. 19), whither by faith each one must pass in spirit.

The service of priesthood then, which is the prerogative of every real Christian, is far higher than the service of ministry.

The special gifts of ministry are enumerated in Ephesians iv. 11. These gifts are living men bestowed by the Lord Jesus Christ upon His Church. In every age and generation, from the day of Pentecost to His second coming, they are continued by divine provision. Sometimes acknowledged, sometimes rejected, sometimes persecuted and slain, sometimes weakened, darkened, well-nigh overwhelmed by submission to human ordinations and formulas, they are not only a blessing, but an absolute necessity to the Church on earth. But as priests, in common with all believers, they exercise higher functions than they do as ministers. As priests, their service is in heaven. As ministers, it is on earth. So that as high as heaven is above earth, so high as to the locality of its exercise is priesthood above ministry.

CHAPTER II.

A FANCY PRIESTHOOD.

FROM this stand-point let us for a moment survey Christendom, and we cannot fail to see how entirely it has strayed from God's appointment in these most sacred trusts.

In the first place, shall we wonder most at the childish recklessness, or at the presumptuous insolence which has set up a fancy priesthood between man and God?

A self-asserted infallibility, turning from the full midday light that reveals the substance without a shadow, has rushed back into the darkness of past dispensations, and brought out at random the shreds of a departed ceremonial.

Failing to see the meaning and the fulfilment of these prophetic types, it has as a consequence failed to see their congruity. The office, the robes, the service of the Levitical priesthood, are mingled, selected, diversified, according to human fantasy of imitation. Not a colour, nor a loop,

nor a fringe, recited in the commands from Sinai, but had a deep and pregnant signification; and the thunders of Jehovah enforced anxious exactitude of obedience. But the system before us, regarding the truths and the terrors of Sinai as of no more importance than the records of an extinct volcano, revels with impunity in a burlesque, half Jewish half heathen, which could not escape the divine wrath for one moment under a dispensation of real earthly ritual. (Levit. xxii. 9.)

The great majority of Christendom approve this, because it interests the imagination, because it does not disturb the conscience, because its elements are earthly, because it is material and tangible, and because the atmosphere of faith in the Son of God, and life through His name, is too high, pure, and rarefied for the natural mind.

That for this life, while the senses last, taste and superstition may easily fill up with form and colour every outline of natural religion is comprehensible; but it is strange indeed that reasoning beings can risk their everlasting future on such a foundation, when the light of God's word reveals clearly the fallacy and the awful gulf that underlies it. (Isa. xxviii. 16, 17.)*

* A fallacy that interests the imagination in matters of religion, however childish its origin, gathers mysterious power as it recedes amidst the shadows of antiquity. Just as the imagined ghosts of people who were contemptible in their lifetime become terrible to the superstitious. In contrast, the word of God, while from the

That a system such as this, which ignores the dispensation under which it exists, should ignore also the special provision which the Lord Jesus has made for ministry to His Church is a matter of course. In fact it leaves no place for Christian ministry. There is no need for evangelists to preach the gospel where sacraments are supposed to save (1 Cor. i. 17); no need of impressing the necessity of heart-service towards God, when a round of mechanical ceremonies and repetitions meets every supposed requirement of righteousness; no meaning in speaking of liberty to enter into the holiest place in heaven, when a hierarchy on earth blocks the way; no sense of individual responsibility possible, when another undertakes it all for you on certain conditions of his own imposing.

Thus this system, which shuts in jealously so many millions in professing Christendom, could not be built but on the ruins of God's workmanship. It puts under foot these two pillars of His rearing; viz., the royal priesthood of all His people, and the preaching and teaching of His word through

beginning, is ever the same in present majesty: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

men authenticated and sent forth by the Lord Jesus Himself.*

* If any are saved amidst all this confusion and corruption, they are saved in contrast to the Jew of old. He was saved because he learned to reason that sacrifices perpetually repeated could never take away sin from the conscience ; and because, further, he learned to follow by faith the straight vista, down which seemed to point like a hand of shadow every innocent life of lamb or bull that was offered, and thus dimly and afar off to descry a great divine sacrifice to be offered once for all. He was saved because he knew that the earthly shadow was thrown by a divine substance.

They are saved (for we do not deny that even amidst this corrupt system some are saved) in spite of, and in contradiction to, everything which they see around them, because some ray of divine light from the cross of the Lord Jesús has pierced the gross earth-born darkness in which they are enclosed, and reached their hearts. But though saved, if they remain where they are, they know nothing of the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free, nothing of the privileges to which a son of God is born, nor of the mighty scope of divine revelation in this age, any more than some poor child of sin and sorrow, who has seen nothing of God's works in nature beyond the little daisy that languishes on the window-sill of some city attic, can know of the glory of sunlit valley, rustling forest, blue sea, and heath-clad mountain.

Gal. iii. 10.

CHAPTER III.

INTRUSIVE OR OBSTRUCTIVE MINISTRY.

ON the other hand, we see multitudes who, in the length of their recoil from this fatal error,* have lost sight of the great truth of which it is a blasphemous parody.

They have indeed substituted Christian ministry for a ritualistic priesthood of man's devising ; but, unhappily, they have also substituted it for the royal priesthood of all believers ordained by God Himself ; and as the certain result of marring the symmetry of God's perfect mechanism, they have weakened themselves in that which they deem their greatest strength.

They have blunted the keen edge of the weapon wherewith they overthrew error, for they have made Christian ministry a matter of special appointment and special training by man, instead of receiving it as a gift from the Lord Jesus, and first acknowledging His training and His selection of the men whom He gives to His Church.

He did not direct His people to set up any

* Human priesthood.

kind of machinery for the manufacture of ministers in His word and doctrine ; but He undertook to provide them directly Himself all through this age. (See Eph. iv.) He undertook to qualify and send them forth as autocratically as He sent the apostles forth ; for He recites apostles first in this passage, and then continues to enumerate those who shall maintain the true and only apostolic succession till His coming again.

He chooses them from among the living, not from among the dead ; from His believing people, His true Church, not from the world without, whether professing or openly opposing.

It is indeed not uncommon in these days to hear the case of Judas cited as giving authority for the introduction into the ministry of those whom the Lord calls hirelings, and whom the Holy Spirit calls grievous wolves.

It would be hard to find a more pitiable illustration of the error of not knowing the Scriptures. The dark and terrible history of an apostate, recorded by the Holy Spirit as an example and a warning, is actually quoted as a precedent and an apology for clothing such men with office now.

Judas was chosen among the twelve who were to be witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and then, after His ascension, to be endued with power from on high, and to go forth and declare what they had seen

and heard, preaching in His name the forgiveness of sins.

From this ministry Judas was cut off by an awful public judgment, that it might be a matter of universal notoriety that such an one could not bear testimony after the Lord's resurrection, nor even dare to open his lips in His service. Gift and faithfulness, not mere office, were henceforth to be the authority for ministry. They were to be "endued with power from on high."* They were to be ministers, "not of the letter, but of the Spirit;" made "according to the gift of the grace of God given unto them by the effectual working of His power." They were to be of the one body, dwelt in by the one Spirit, and called in one hope of their calling.

Now it is not contended that the human ordaining or appointing of a man to be a Christian minister disqualifies one whom the Lord Himself has sent to be a gift to His Church, but it constantly places him in a false position, as we shall see presently. It is admitted that the greatest care may be exercised in the training and instruction of youth for so high and responsible a trust; and that this care (when it is

* Even during the short interval before the revelation from the Lord that He would Himself choose ministers for His Church, the apostles themselves did not dare to select. They fell back upon the old Jewish appeal to God by casting lots, thus leaving the appointment to Him.

according to knowledge) is often blessed by God to the conversion of those who are the objects of it.* But when the most has been said in its favour, there still remains the essential error of this custom, that it sets aside Scripture and intercepts the direct dealing of the Lord Jesus Christ with His Church. And as the perfect symmetry of divine order cannot be infringed in any of its departments without disastrous results, so in this, the most important sphere of them all, so delicate and liable to displacement, that the Master has charged Himself solely with its administration, the consequences of man's intrusion have borne awful witness to the wisdom of God.

Thus an official ministry has superseded a heaven-sent ministry; and as office cannot confer divine gift, human invention met the difficulty by supplying formula, and so grew up liturgies, homilies, forms, privileges, a framework and a machinery that supports and moves from without, when there is no motive-power within, but cramps and distorts true spiritual life wherever it is found.

Are there any of our readers who could not point out within their own knowledge men who have been humanly appointed to the ministry of God's word—men perhaps excellent in all the

* Conversion is indeed an unspeakable grace. It involves all the blessings of eternity; but it does not necessarily involve gifts of preaching or teaching during this dispensation.

relations of life, but who never open their lips upon the subject of religion except functionally, and would never speak of God at any time if they were not ecclesiastics? Are these the Lord's appointing?

But let us turn, and we shall see greater abominations than these. If gift is an essential for ministry, how much more life? And yet what multitudes of men in Christendom are at this moment by man's appointment made nominal and official ministers of God's word who have not even life.

The 'Holy Spirit says they are *grievous wolves*. "But we have put sheep's clothing on them," say men.

The Holy Spirit says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema." "He may be so personally," say men; "but if other men have laid their hands on him he can minister in God's Church officially, though he be accursed."

The Lord says, "My sheep will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

"Oh, but we have provided for that difficulty too!" say men. "We have invented an article which says the sheep may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the sacraments."

The Holy Spirit says the men who are the gifts

to the Church are *for the perfecting of the saints*. Can a saint be perfected by a child of Satan?

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Yet, though *he cannot receive them, though they are foolishness to him*, according to man's provision he may stand up publicly and teach them. Can a more terrible proof be desired of the awful consequences of superseding God's truth by human invention?

But let us turn yet again, and we shall see greater abominations than these. If men have provided that the Moabite and Ammonite may not only enter but minister in the congregation of the Lord, they have gone on to exclude the true Israel of God. Men who manifestly and confessedly have been given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church, *who have approved themselves to God workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, who have *made full proof of their ministry*, are disqualified by human ordinance from ministering in the most numerous congregations of professing Christians in these lands, because they cannot submit to a human process which thus virtually supersedes divine authority, and which would shut them up within the limits of a sect, whereas they have

been given to the whole Church of Christ on earth.

Thus a machinery has been devised which every day proves itself notoriously powerless to shut out evil, but rises at once to absolute efficiency when it becomes a question of excluding good.*

What wonder that doctrines such as these should have a continual tendency in honest and logical minds to produce contempt for divine gift, and reverence for human office; to elevate tradition, and lower Scripture; to substitute sacraments for faith, and form for reality. But familiarity with error is always a downward course, and thus, in fact, like a locomotive drawing its train along on ever-curving rails, this system in its integrity is imperceptibly conducting millions who follow it back into the very darkness from which their ancestors emerged.

Even where ministry is better understood, more carefully guarded and exercised under a more loyal sense of responsibility to the Head of the Church, there still remain sad results of human interference with divine order. Let us consider, for instance, the commonly received notions of

* It would occupy too much space to enumerate the varieties of heresy (from salvation by sacraments on the one hand, down to denial of atonement by blood on the other) which may be found safely nestling within a pale that jealously excludes from its pulpits the whole continental pastorate, the ministers of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, and of all nonconforming communions.

worship on the Lord's-day. Worship, as we have seen, is only offered in the holiest; that is, in the presence of God in heaven. (Heb. x. 19-22.) It is the attitude of priests, and the privilege of none but priests.* They will have no higher privilege through all eternity, and by so much the service that brings them together rises above ministry, which is temporary and dispensational.

Such is not the attitude represented in the meeting of a minister and congregation. The very expression denies equality of responsibility and privilege. *One* is authorized and summoned to conduct public worship. The rest are silent and passive. If he cannot attend, or obtain another to represent him as minister, the congregation must go away, though all the true Christians among them are priests. Surely it must be manifest in this to what an extent ministry has intruded into the place of priesthood, and then gone on to exclude it altogether. In fact, it has obliterated the characteristics of true worship. For true collective worship implies an assembly of priests. But the substitution of ministry implies a congregation that may consist partly or even wholly of unbelievers. And even if it should so happen that a congregation were

* It matters little where they meet. There is now no consecrated spot on earth. Man's so-called blessing cannot remove God's curse. No amount of consecration will prevent any spot of land from producing thorns and briers.

gathered consisting entirely of God's true people, why should the expression of gratitude, or of need, be confined to one alone?

If all have their hearts full, and under the leading of the Holy Spirit, by what authority does one shut the mouths of the rest?

He may perhaps be the man at that moment the least suited of all present to express a deep sense of the reality, the awe, and the joy of God's presence.

He may be depressed, fatigued, distracted by circumstances of body or mind. His spirit may be under the temporary cloud of broken communion. But, nevertheless, he is the locomotive in man's machinery. For the whole train is waiting motionless and silent till he is linked on, and then all must go forward. If the impetus be given by fire from God's altar, well; if not—yet all must go forward; for things must be done “decently and in order;”* and it is better to get on with strange fire than not at all.

Is it according to God's order that machinery should supply the lack of life? Nay, has not the substitution of machinery taken away all sense of the need of life, and liberated outward worship

* This text, taken in its place, sums up the Holy Spirit's commands, forbidding two prophets to rise together, and prohibiting women from speaking in the Church. Men generally use it as a basis on which to construct any fancy form of worship that enters their minds.

from a sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit?

Has not this opened the door wide to that terrible condition of Christendom predicted as characteristic of the last days, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"? Indeed this prediction has entered upon its accomplishment whenever an assembly, gathered statedly for worship, includes a large proportion of mere professors, as a necessity to be accepted and defended.

And yet there lingers in Christendom a conviction, that the exercise of true Christian worship is not an occasion for the mingling of light and darkness before God. And this conviction is acknowledged whenever an inner circle of those called "communicants" are gathered. The very expression "communicants," common *partakers of that one bread*, would seem to contain the idea of the equality and the responsibility which belongs to Christian priesthood. Yet, strange to say, the Lord's table is considered the place for preserving most scrupulously the pre-eminence of ministry. The "administering of the sacraments" is looked upon as the special and highest privilege conferred by the laying on of hands; and the presence of one thus authorized is esteemed essential to the "celebration" of the Lord's Supper.

Thus has human invention altered the character

and reversed the order of the Lord Jesus Christ's institution. Scripture knows no such expression, and permits no such thought as "administering the sacrament."

In the gathering together of His people for the most solemn purpose that can assemble them on earth, that of *shewing forth the Lord's death till He come*, there is no need of ministry ; that is, of gift. Ministry certainly is not forbidden. The Holy Spirit may be pleased to use ministry if it is present for a word of teaching or exhortation, but it is to be exercised as subordinate to priesthood, and as leading to the better comprehension or more earnest appreciation of the exercise of those privileges which belong peculiarly to priesthood.

It must be evident then how ignorantly and daringly a human president intrudes in such a scene. He usurps the place of the Lord Himself, and he subverts divine order by placing that first which should be last. And he makes dependent upon subordinate gift, or even upon unaccredited officialism, a royal prerogative which God has conferred upon all His children to lift them in worship above all human aid or interference, and to charter to them the simplest form in which they can gather upon earth as the nearest starting-point to the holiest place in heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COURSE AND END OF WILL-WORSHIP.

THUS is will-worship (Col. ii. 20-23) throughout Christendom in rebellion against God. It may be in ignorance; it may be sometimes in much honesty of purpose; it may be even in a spirit of mistaken reverence; but nevertheless it is in rebellion against God.

* For God is absolute. He requires as implicit obedience now as when He spoke in thunder from Sinai. And in the worship which He has revealed as according to His mind, He has left no unguarded side to need man's protective outworks, no undeveloped organization to be perfected by man's improving hand. His Church was to be composed of living stones. It was to "grow, all fitly framed together, into an holy temple in the Lord."

The outline indeed has become indistinct on earth; but however separated, scattered, sometimes hidden among ruins, the living stones that compose it, each name is enrolled in heaven

(Heb. xii. 23) as belonging to the "general assembly and Church of the first-born." And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to build together each local circle or assembly of these living stones on earth into a dwelling-place of God, as He did the Church at Ephesus. (Eph. ii. 22.)*

So perfect, so divine, yet so simple, is this organization, that each little detachment is but the whole in microcosm, as each dew-drop is a miniature of the ocean.

Thus, as God the Father created the whole anew in Christ, the last Adam, and as the Spirit is the only teacher and guide of the whole in things pertaining to God, so should this unity of the whole express itself visibly upon earth wherever its constituent parts are found. Each community of these new creatures should broadly and unvaryingly illustrate these great truths; and thus, when gathered together for worship, however separated by geographical distance, should all be the counterparts one of another, and of the great whole which they are called to represent: for on such occasions especially they set forth their common prerogative and responsibility.

Prerogative and responsibility are inseparable

* κατοικητήριον (sc. χώρον) local habitation. The word occurs only thrice in Scripture. In Ps. lxxvi. 2: "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His DWELLING-PLACE in Zion." And again in Rev. xviii. 2: "Babylon . . . is become the HABITATION of devils," &c. In each passage, strictly defined locality is the prominent intimation.

through all God's administration ; and if either is weakened in man's hands, the other suffers.

When therefore Christians yield or suppress their priesthood, they give up by so much their prerogative of birthright in the new creation ; but that they cannot as lightly part from their responsibility, is proved by the confusion and division that reigns in Christendom.

The privilege of priesthood is free access to the presence of the great King Himself ; so that life and blessing, strength and guidance, are drawn directly from the fountain-head. There is no promise in Scripture of communicated blessing in any other way. On the contrary, there are multiplied warnings of the folly and wickedness of seeking any lower or less spiritual source. And the reason is, that from beginning to end all is divine. The work of atonement was a divine work. Resurrection was the divine birth of the new creation, and in all its manifestations and developments that new creation draws every breath from on high.

Thus is it in entire contrast to all human religious formations, which are framed to meet the politics or the exigencies of the generation amidst which they arise, and which, as time goes on, either oppress by their rigidity, or lose their outline by compromise.

Hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking (in

Eph. iv. 15) of the divine provisions for the administration of the Church on earth. In this passage He tells Christians, that "being followers of the truth in love, they should grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ : from whom the whole body being fitly framed together and compacted by means of every joint of the supply, according to the working in the measure of each several part, maketh the growth of the body unto the building up of itself in love." Here we have a living organization in all the strength and majesty of perfect symmetry through all its parts ; every member interknit with another, and in divine unison yielding instant obedience to the glorious Head.

Human interference, with its formulas and its articles, can most easily trammel in such a case. It cannot aid.

The new creation is represented in Scripture as perfect, being beyond death, and the Church is the first-fruits of the new creation. There was indeed leaven offered with the loaves of the first-fruits (Lev. xxiii. 17), which were the types of the Church ; but this leaven set forth the principle of indwelling sin which remains in the individual members of the Church here below, a principle to be contended with, subdued, and held in subjection in the life and heart of each believer. (Rom. vii. viii.) This evil principle is that part of the old

creation which remains in the believer till his death or his translation. (1 Cor. xv. 52.) It never improves, never changes (Rom. viii. 7), and must be destroyed; for because of it the body of the believer who dies is sown in corruption, to be raised apart from it in incorruption.

But the whole mechanism—so powerful, yet so delicate—which should move His Church under His commands, is projected from God's own mind. It is altogether of the new creation. It would be a slander upon His power and wisdom to attribute imperfection to such an organization. The divine system is one thing, and is perfect in itself. It is another thing for beings to be brought into it by grace, who have a sinful nature remaining in them. But God will have none of this evil introduced into His service or administration. Failure and loss of spiritual blessing marks its presence now, as temporal and bodily judgments avenged insults to His Majesty of old. Indeed the latter are not unknown even in this dispensation. (Lev. ii. 11; 1 Cor. v. 8; xi. 30-32.)*

* In contrast to these commands hear the confession of one of the most important sects in Christendom. "In the visible Church sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's (an apology that but intensifies the sin), and do minister by HIS commission and authority!" Let us recapitulate this extraordinary statement. "THE EVIL (*i.e.* the children of Satan, the Anathema of the Lord,) HAVE CHIEF AUTHORITY SOMETIMES in the visible Church, and do MINISTER

If this perfect system of God's creation is not now expressed in Christianity upon earth, it is not because it was too shadowy and indefinite in its formation. It is because it was too perfect for men to carry out, except in unbroken communion with the Head, and in absolute submission to the guiding of the Holy Spirit. Finding that it would not work on lower principles, they should have recognized their own weakness and sought the strength of God.

Instead of this, they set about to construct something which would work on their own principles. The spiritual glory departed, but they recast in the mould of their own imaginations such remnants of truth as tradition retained, and, behold, there came out this calf!

And as it is impossible to lower or corrupt the mode of worship without lowering and corrupting the conception of the Being who is worshipped, so the civilized world, which has its religion adapted to the tastes of the age, has also its god, who is a respectable idol, and whose sphere of action is limited to presiding over certain prescribed forms and ceremonies at stated periods in his public shrines. He is not supposed to be so

BY HIS (the Lord Jesus Christ's) COMMISSION and AUTHORITY." We leave it with the consciences of those of our fellow-Christians who are most concerned, to consider the responsibility of accepting, as an article of the Christian faith, this awful contradiction in terms.

indecorous as to leave the dignified retirement of these retreats, to pry into the lives of his votaries at other times or places. The department which concerns the gratification of the religious emotions is strictly reserved to him, fits perfectly into its subordinate ornamental place in the framework of society, and sheds refinement around.

The sacramentalist doctrine of a material deity upon the altar, helplessly manipulated in the hands of men, is readily accepted as not inconsistent with a religion that treats its god as a conventional idea from beginning to end.

To this platform leads every path that turns aside from God's only way. Many are to be found in these erring lines who have not followed them so far, but it is the logical end of all, and it is the natural tendency of most of the unregenerate hearts in Christendom. (Rom. i. 25.)

One step farther, and we have before us the full developed apostasy that closes this age, when man exalts himself above all that is called God, or worshipped. (2 Thess. ii.) The beginning is set forth by the Holy Spirit (in Col. ii.) in words of warning against the will-worship that ceases to hold the Head.

In the second epistle of Peter and the epistle of Jude, the same almighty hand traces the devastating progress of this defection in those awful pictures which, opening with the confusion of a

mixed multitude, traitors and true, ranged under one banner, darken into more unvaried views of universal empty profession, and then of blasphemous mockery.

Once more in Rev. xiii. the scene opens, but the lurid light that plays on it is from beneath. Will-worship, always departing from God, has reached its uttermost pole, and banding the whole civilized world (that which was once called Christendom) in intolerant Catholicity of creature worship (*v.* 8), it proscribes the very name of Jehovah on the earth, which is the work of His hands. (*vv.* 15-17.)

Such is the downward course of Christendom as revealed in God's word. Its beginning, an apparently slight deflection from God's straight way. Its end, a divergence as wide as midnight from midday.

So fatal is the principle that endeavours to sustain truth by condoning evil. The only result is, that the truth recedes, and the evil spreads till later it gains "chief authority," and finally casts out truth altogether, setting up in its place the last great lie.* (*2 Thess. ii. 11.*)

What course is left to a just and gracious God but judgment?

* τῷ ψεύδει. THE LIE. Not a negative, a mere denial of truth, but a constructive affirmative; the great system of Satan's revelation to be built on the ruins of God's truth.

Merciful necessity, as well as righteous wrath, will call for it. When transgression has come to the full; when darkness has come down on the region where once there was light in the Lord; when Christendom has turned blessing into a curse; when it lays its civilization, its power, its wealth at the feet of Satan, then must the black plague-spot be rent out of the earth by a faithful Creator, so that even heathenism may escape from a more fatal corruption, and that the ends of the world may survive to see the salvation of our God.

For apostasy from the reign of grace there is no restoration. Israel sinned against law, and put to death the Prince of life when He came, but they did so in ignorance (Acts iii. 17), and as a nation they shall yet obtain mercy. But Christendom leaves herself no place for mercy. With the example of Israel under judgment always before her eyes, with the gospel of God's grace open in her hands, she has trifled for centuries with the blood of the cross. That blood was so precious to God that it was taken into the holy place in heaven, yet not to be even there the object of adoration. To worship that in the presence of Him who shed it, would be to worship God's glory instead of His person. That holy blood, one part of Christendom, pretends to bring down to earth in profane travesty

of worship. Another part disbelieves its eternal efficacy in atonement, and all will finally unite to trample it under foot in contempt and defiance; and then will come the judgment that shall shake earth and heaven, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." *

Prov. xxvii. 12.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW CREATION.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.”—2 *Cor.* v. 17.

THE Greek word, which in the authorized version of the New Testament is translated “Church,” signifies literally “a called out assembly.” In Colossians occurs the expression, “His body, which is the called out assembly;” and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is called several times in that epistle the “Head” of this “body.”

No figure could more forcibly express honourable, intimate, intelligent, inseparable union. Adam, in his unfallen state, invested with the royalty of the whole earth, would have been a noble type of those whom God would call to glory and honour. But who shall describe, or who shall comprehend, the glory set forth in the revelation of union with Him who is invested with the sovereignty of heaven and earth? (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Yet to nothing less than this is the assembly of all believers called out. “For we

are members of His body." It may be objected that this is a figure, and therefore not to be taken literally. Granted that it is a figure, yet a figure in Scripture is not (as often among men) an exaggerated illustration.

A Scriptural figure of divine things, drawn from man's experience, contains a reality as much above the natural man's experience as heaven is above earth. Hence, if we regard any characteristic set forth by this figure, we may know that that characteristic is perfection.

Is life in a risen Saviour taught? Then it is His life who is a life-giving Spirit; and who, dying no more, communicates a life which dies no more, over which death has no more dominion. And if men will persist in attributing to this immortal life in the soul the liability of passing again under death, it is because they judge the transcendent revelation of God solely from the experience and analogy of a world perishing under the curse. They do not see that wrath, condemnation, and death divide every child of Adam in his natural condition from this immortal life.

This life was not communicable from the blessed Lord in incarnation; for He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It was not communicable in His death; for in His

death there was substitution, not union. It was communicable only through His resurrection* (Eph. ii.), after wrath, condemnation, and death had exhausted themselves upon His holy head, never to touch Him more. This is the life of the new creation, which can no more go back under death, than time can roll back upon its course. Its Head and Sponsor not Adam, but Christ; its future not conditional, but assured. (Rev. xxi. 3-5.)

There is probably no one accepting revealed Christianity who doubts the perfect security of the future new creation. Yet the very same language used in this passage in Revelation, is applied in 2 Cor. v. 17 to every individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ now. Thus, if the

* An obvious question may present itself with regard to all who died in the Lord, from the days of Adam down to the day of the resurrection. How, it may be asked, could they partake of a life not yet communicable? The real difficulty is not one of time, but of causality. The Almighty Creator could give life everlasting at any time; but never without a righteous reason. His grace and His power waited upon His righteousness. He must first be a just God, and then a Saviour. Having from all eternity in His view the very spot and the very hour in which grace and righteousness could meet and go hand in hand for evermore, He allowed no difficulty, however transcendent, to shake His purpose; and, ever blessed be His name, no suffering, however overwhelming, to defer its accomplishment by a single hour. Abraham and David were permitted to see that day. It was set forth in every sacrifice that smoked on the altars before Israel, and those who trusted God according to the revelation made to them, were enrolled from the foundation of the world in the Book of life of the slain Lamb; and were kept, as we are "kept, by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed."

whole new creation shall be placed beyond the power of condemnation and death, so must any part of it. And as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in this age are the first-fruits (James i. 18) and highest part of that new creation, called to joint heirship with its Head, then are they also, from the moment they believe in their hearts on Him, placed beyond all reach of condemnation and spiritual death.* (Compare Gal. v. 6, with vi. 15.)

It is the soul of the believer which is thus raised in this new life, in token that the body also will be raised or translated at the Lord's coming. (Rom. viii. 10, 11.) This resurrection of the body is called, in John v. 29, "the resurrection of life." Unbelievers are raised to the resurrection of (*κρίσις*) crisis, or trial, as the word signifies, rather than condemnation (though condemnation is the certain consequence of that resurrection), in fact, to the resurrection of the "day of judgment." There is no *κρίσις*, no "day of judgment," for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as distinctly stated in verse 24 of the same chapter. Their "day of judgment" is passed. They were found guilty, condemned, and executed in the person of their Substitute in the "day of judgment" on Calvary. (Heb. ix. 27, 28.)

Thus, as the Lord Jesus Himself came into this world a holy, perfect Being, to endure the

* See Appendix.

contradiction of sinners, and to suffer the horror of the presence of sin and the curse on everything around Him, so is the new life in the believer as perfect as He who gave it, but in constant contact with the evil that is not only around but within him, and in this suffering ever receiving the sympathy and succour of the great High Priest in the heavens. (Heb. ii. 12 ; iv. 15, 16.)

A saved sinner is then, during this age, the most wonderful being in the history of time or eternity—a complex being with two natures, serving each a different law and a different master, irreconcilable to the death, and for ever at deadly war within him. For Satan has disputed every step of possession with God, and still retains a legal right for the lodgment of the old active principle of evil in every believer.* He will therefore strive to damage where he cannot destroy.

In Rom. viii. we may see a close analogy set forth by the Holy Spirit between the presence of sin in the material world around us, and the presence of sin in the child of God. The whole unreasoning and innocent creation, implicated in the fall of mankind, is there beheld crying out under its sufferings at the hands of man, under sin and Satan. (vv. 20-22.) And then is heard the groan of the new creation within the believer,

* A right which involves mortality of the body. (Rom. viii. 10, 11.)

intelligently appreciating the cause of all this misery, and feeling the unutterable hatefulness of intimate and spiritual contact with it. The deliverance of both is associated, like their sufferings. The believer received the earnest and expectation of this deliverance when he was saved; and in all the aspiration of his new nature, and led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, he longs instinctively (if not always with the full intelligence to be derived only from the teaching of God's word) for the extension of it to his whole being. (1 John iii. 2.)

Then shall he be liberated, body, soul, and spirit, from the presence and contamination of that sin which now so distresses his heart and confuses his judgment, which often brings him low, and, if he were under any other principle of rule than the free 'grace of God, would soon regain supreme dominion over him. (Rom. vi. 14.)

And into this glorious liberty from the power and corruption of sin, which awaits the children of God, shall the groaning creation enter also. The new creation in the children of God is a mystery to the world now. Christ is within them the hope of glory. Then the new creation will be a manifestation through them, and will shed its blessing on the whole material world around. But still they will be the only first-fruits of it. As now they morally anticipate, and to some extent morally

reveal, that coming glory (Matt. v. 14), so shall they then, themselves in the full and manifested fruition of it, still precede its final and perfect extension to all things around.

A thousand years must pass before He that sitteth on the throne shall say, "Behold, I make all things new."

A thousand glorious years indeed, lighted up with the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness (Rev. xx. 1-7); and then a storm, more dark and terrible than ever swept the earth before, clears the atmosphere for ever. (Rev. xx. 8-15.) Then shall the new heaven and the new earth be worthy of Him and them who are to dwell in them. (Rev xxi. 1-8.)

But the glory and the peace of that everlasting day will not be more certain proof of security than the groan and the conflict now in the heart of every sinner, who, through simple faith in the Son of God, has been born into the new creation.

1 Cor. xv. 23, 24.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REAL PRESENCE.

“Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age.”

Matt. xxviii. 20.

THE standing of the individual believer has been dwelt upon in the foregoing chapter, as an indispensable preliminary to the understanding of any endeavour to set forth the position of the whole Church.

No building can be constructed without materials, and the only materials that can enter into the construction of the assembly of the Lord Jesus Christ here below, are the living stones who have been brought out of the quarries of this earth by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have seen from Scripture that His Church is an assembly of priests, and none are priests but those who are born of God.

We have seen also that it (the Church) is the first-fruits of the new creation, severed by death from its standing in Adam, and gathered round

its Head, the last Adam, and furthermore, united to Him by His life.

The collective position then of the whole Church grows naturally out of the individual position of each believer.

There is but one Head in heaven. There is but one body upon earth. (Eph. iv. 15, 16.)

If, in a human body endowed with health and symmetry, every action manifests grace, vigour, and majesty, it is because every member moves in easy and instantaneous obedience to the head.

Such *should be* the body of Christ on earth.

But let such a human body as has been described be manacled with heavy chains, one limb fettered to a massive pillar, another to a heavy block, proper nourishment withheld, and the light of day partially withdrawn, while each member moves spasmodically and discordantly in every painful effort to obtain rest.

Such *is* the body of Christ.

Vitality survives ; for the life is His ; but circulation, and power, and unity of action are restrained, paralysed, nullified by the separated sects of Christendom in which believers are bound up. Thus the living are divided from each other, and joined in unnatural and ghastly association with the dead.

And the first step in a return to the principles and instincts of the new creation, whether of a

community or an individual, may be expressed in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He had given life to one who was bound in grave-clothes among the dead, "Loose him, and let him go."

And the immediate instinct of the liberated community or individual may be expressed in the words, "I will arise and go to my Father."

For He, the Father, is not the God of the dead, but of the living. To the living, and not to the dead (in trespasses and sins), is the promise, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age." Here is the real presence. For it is with the new creation alone that He is present. And the blessings of that promise are openly claimed when His people are assembled as members of this new creation.

Thus it is within the observation of every one, that the great awakenings of late in some parts of Christendom have been preceded by the gathering of God's children for prayer, irrespective of sect, in instinctive recognition of this truth. And God abundantly blessed these acknowledgments so far as they went.

Temporary as the efforts were, they set free for the time the longings of the new creation, struggling ever to manifest life, and to rejoice in union. They showed plainly, for all who were willing to look farther, that the path lies straight and open to greater and more permanent blessing.

They teach by proved experiment the truth which God's word most plainly lays down; viz., that there is no need of evolving out of man's intellect elaborate rules and specifications for so gigantic an undertaking as building up the Church of God on earth.

The Head that has planned is in heaven. Let the heart be open on earth to His teaching. He alone builds and restores. (1 Cor. iii. 4-11.) Whenever man, falling back on his own sagacity, has begun to construct, he has only divided. Whenever he has stood aside, and left it to God, and yielded his own heart, union has resulted in proportion to obedience; and blessing to the Church, and blessing to the world, must follow manifested union of God's children. Hear the prayer of the Head of the Church: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be (one) in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." Who doubts that this prayer will be fulfilled when the world shall look upon the glorious manifestation of the sons of God?* But who can doubt

* The best authorities omit the word "one" in the second clause of this verse, which reads, "that they also may be in us." But the union of all believers with the Father and Son, and with each other, first real and then manifested, is clearly the scope of the passage.

that worldliness, unfaithfulness, and want of obedience on the part of the Church to the Master's expressed will, are the sole hindrances to the fulfilment in grace of that prayer during the present age?

No framework of man's devising ever did, or ever could, secure life to any portion of the professing Church, though it might sustain or enforce uniformity. Life must precede and effect true union. Catholicity on any other basis is but a league of death, none the less ghastly to true spiritual perception, that life is often found within its borders yielding unnatural conformity to the terms of convention.

It is owing solely to the inherent vitality of Christianity on earth that it has survived the hands of men.

A living organization, drawing every breath from on high, the pulse of an incorruptible immortality beating in its veins, it will show its heavenly origin and its perfect beauty of design in every part, and at every time, wherein it escapes from human violence to take refuge with God.

Are there found in any locality two Christians only who desire to be set free from denominational boundaries which separate them from one another, or which enclose them with those who are not God's children? To them is the promise given,

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The Real Presence is guaranteed to them, and thus gathered, they form the unit of perfect ecclesiastical organization.

Are two thousand desirous to manifest their heavenly origin as born again of the Spirit, as united to their Lord and to one another by ties that man has not woven?

Then let them gather together on the very same principle, acknowledging their only Head, and setting themselves free from every bond and ligature that would hinder the free circulation of His will through every member. Wherever they meet He will be in the midst of them. Remembering that they were "washed from their sins in His blood, and made priests unto His God and Father," let them assemble round His table, and show forth the Lord's death, giving thanks to His name, in exercise of their common priesthood.

As simply, as inartificially, and as unerringly as the head employs hand or foot or eye to carry out the manifold requirements of the body, so will He choose every ministration, preacher, teacher, pastor, or elder, and summon to its place every help that every joint supplieth throughout this body, so precious to Him.

Order will be manifested; order according to the revelation of divine symmetry (Eph. iv.), not

according to the expedients of human arrangement.

There will not be a continual preaching of the gospel (God's invitation to sinners to come and be saved) *within* the Church, as is customary now when congregations are gathered for worship. An army must indeed be utterly demoralized, when the generals are found always seeking recruits within their own ranks. The camp should be the place of instruction. Recruiting should go on outside.

Within God's army, His warriors are to be instructed in the use of the Sword. They are to be exercised, disciplined, equipped for their various ministrations (Eph. iv. Greek) by the officers whom He supplies.

Gift of rule is to be faithfully, graciously, responsibly exercised by those whom He calls manifestly to rule; gift of teaching by those whom He calls to teach. (1 Peter v.) God's soldiers, living in obedience to Him, will ever readily and thankfully recognize His appointments, realizing that they are in an enemy's country (1 Peter v. 8; Eph. vi. 10-18), and that His foreseeing eye can alone provide the specially suited leaders for every contingency that may arise.

He will raise up evangelists also, whose mission shall be, not to the Church, the called out assembly, but to the world outside, to which they will carry

the message of salvation full, free, and eternal for every one who truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who accept the gracious invitation will pass at once into the assembly of believers, knowing salvation to be a settled question, and seeking to be led onwards in the knowledge of God, and to learn to exercise the ministrations, of whatsoever kind they may be, to which He has called them.

Thus no place would be found for sectional or denominational differences between those who are one in Christ. And the broad line of distinction, which God Himself has drawn between the Church and the world, would come out so marked and clear that none could deceive themselves, while the inducement to deceive others would almost disappear when Christianity should cease to be a fashionable religion *conformed to this age*.

That all this should seem visionary, impracticable, and subversive of modern order to many readers, is most probable ; but that it was Catholic and Apostolic, none can honestly deny who will carefully study the Acts and the Epistles. Nor has the divine model changed by a hair's-breadth because the builders on earth have turned away from it, and constructed, according to their differing notions, the heterogeneous pile which is called Christendom.

The difficulty to the human mind of carrying

on such a system is no evidence of its fallacy or unsuitableness, but rather of its divine origin. For it cannot hold together except in entire dependence upon God, and simple obedience to His revealed will.

There is no true Christian but will readily confess that in his own individual experience he must depend every moment for support from on high, and that no artificial religious machinery can supply the lack of communion with God in his soul.

Can he suppose the collective body of Christians to be less dependent upon divine guidance? "Having begun in the Spirit, are they then made perfect by the flesh?"

Or if it be objected that each Christian brings with him this evil of indwelling sin, and that therefore there is the more difficulty in controlling such dangerous elements when collected, should not this be an additional reason for casting themselves more simply and entirely upon God? More especially since the Lord has provided for this need by the additional promise of His presence in a special way to take charge of His gathered people.

He Himself will be in the midst to carry out His own divine organization. And shall we turn from this Real Presence to the *weak and beggarly* elements of human devising? The ordering of

His Church is by far the most important thing to Him on earth during this age. "Take heed to yourselves," said 'Paul to the Ephesian elders, "and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

He bought the Church with His blood, and then the Holy Ghost came down to be His only Vicar on earth, Himself to appoint the overseers or bishops in every assembly. If such sacred trusts had been left by men to His appointment the grievous wolves described in the passage referred to would not have come in. The Holy Ghost has not appointed the wolves and hirelings of Christendom, whatsoever hands have been laid upon them.

To whom, then, shall the faithful turn who desire "to flee from hirelings"?

Even "to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build them up." The God who bought the Church with His blood tells His people that amidst all this danger, heresy, and disaffection, "His word is able to build them up."

That which articles, and councils, and creeds have failed to do, "His word is able to do."

With the decline and apostasy of Christendom before His mind, the Master left this special promise of His presence as a royal charter to the

many or the few who should at any time claim it in the obedience and simplicity of faith.

Let them stand forth in the power of their priesthood. True humility will take no lower place than that which God assigns. The conviction of utter weakness, yet of high responsibility, will cause them to close round Him who is their Strength and their Redeemer.

The world will see in this inartificial association nothing but irregularity, disorganization, anarchy.

And, in truth, these all lie at the door ; nay, the very seeds of these are among them, ready to develope at any moment, if the assembly is not abiding in Christ.

But if this position is their weakness, it is their strength too. The weakness is on the surface. The strength lies deep and hidden. Every conventional veil and covering has been torn from the devices of Satan, and from the dangers arising out of their own tempers and dispositions. Evil must work openly ; for they have come to the Light, and "all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the Light : for whatsoever doth make manifest is Light."

Thus it was with the Church at Corinth. Paul can open his epistle to them by speaking of "the grace of God which has been given to them by Jesus Christ." Here is their strength. "He is

made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Then the whole epistle is full of their weakness.

The surface of their life as an assembly of Christ is ruffled, tossed, lashed into waves by angry passions, jealousies, fearful sins against their Lord and Master. But all is detected. There is no sheltering under condoning articles and frameworks of men. Christ is still confessed as their only Head. And He is among them with eyes of fire, to pierce into their hearts and consciences, and to reveal the remedy, while He lays open the evil to its source. If they will not take heed, and examine and judge themselves, His hand must be raised to chasten and save; for with Him, even in discipline, "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (1 Cor. xi. 32.)

But there is nothing more entirely foreign to the administration of the Church through the whole epistle, than the idea of seeking deliverance from the disorders that afflicted them, in formulated rules, articles, liturgies, and hierarchies.

The greater the evil that threatens the Church, the more simply and closely it is seen gathering round its Lord, and in His power exercising restorative discipline; not the clergy over the laity (a distinction entirely of man's invention), but all together as assembled in the privilege of their

common birthright, and the symmetry of their varied membership. (1 Cor. v. 3, 4.)

From this order of things there is no development spoken of in Scripture except the awful development of evil in Christendom already referred to, the development in which ecclesiasticism of man's pattern plays an awful part.

From the order of worship left to us in the Acts and the Epistles, there is no development even before the throne of God and of the Lamb, as opened to our view in Revelation. (Rev. iv. v.)

There circumstances are seen changed, and sin is gone, and the ministry that was given for an age of conflict has merged for ever in royal priesthood. But the attitude of worship is the same. There is the same nearness to the person of the king; the same freedom from human interference, that should animate Scriptural worship now.

They sit before the throne in the prerogative of birthright. They rise to cast their crowns before Him who sits in their midst. They praise Him with one accord, and angels rejoice beholding their order, for it is perfect.

That which will be present to sight then is given to faith now. The blood will not wash them cleaner then than it has washed them now. Human interference will not be more out of place then than it is now.

Form, and glitter, and colour, and art—things which raise religious emotions through the senses—can but cloud the eye of faith.

Simplicity is the only vestibule to sublimity in worship.

Let all circumstances be subservient to this principle. Let no outward show attract the senses, and, if possible, let no external discomfort distract the mind.

Let not the soul flit vaguely round a poor earthly interior, decorated and graven by man's art and device; but let her plume her eagle's wings, and fix her eagle gaze full on the ineffable splendour of the holiest place in the heavens, and worship in the very presence of her God.

*Let this be sought, and in humble faith and communion maintained as the attitude of a Christian assembly, and however fractional in numbers, its divine strength will be manifested as surely as God is true. There will be no need of conventional codes or hypothetical tests to prevent heresy or contamination. Order and discipline will be insured through all the ranks, and strength and counsel for every emergency as it arises will flow from the manifold wisdom of the Head.

The strength of this position will always be felt in the professing Church, and in the world around. It must bring blessing in some measure. For "a true witness delivereth souls." (Prov. xiv. 25.)

It will also most probably arouse contempt and dislike.

Wheresoever a few raise the banner of simple allegiance to God, they must remember that it is a challenge to Satan. They must be prepared for constant conflict, not indeed against flesh and blood, but with the wicked spirits in the heavenly places.

If in that war, in which there is no discharge, that war which each maintains, or should maintain daily in the citadel of his own heart, the enemy gains ground, then the struggle will be transferred to a wider arena, and the evil manifested in a more concrete form. (Heb. xii. 14, 15.) The assembly itself will be disturbed, as it was in Corinth, by evil doctrine or evil practice.

Yet still the weapon, which fell from the hand of the individual member when he yielded his post, is the only one that can be caught up and used again to discomfit the enemy. Though one or more have *failed of the grace of God*, still in that power alone the victory is to be won.

He has laid down sufficient outlines in His word, and sufficient precedents for the practical course to be adopted in every case.

For instance, if there be difficulty arising from misunderstandings, weaknesses, and sins of temper, pride, or other outbreaks of the wicked and despic-

able heart within, then Matt. xviii. 15-17 tells us plainly how to proceed.

If the evil declares itself in immorality in any form, and that faithful remonstrance does not bring self-judgment and repentance, we have the precedent of 1 Cor. v., and many other directions in the same epistle.

If there be irregularities of order in worship or ministry, we have 1 Cor. xi.-xiv.

If it be a question of false doctrine, the course to be adopted is clear in Titus iii. 9-11.

For, written inspiration was continued to the Church by the Holy Spirit, during a period amply sufficient to lay down rule or example for guidance throughout the present age. So that no contingency can arise in the experience of an individual, or in the history of an assembly, which has not been foreseen and provided for.

The Lord Himself has delivered to us principles which should instruct under every emergency with divine clearness, and He teaches the application of those principles to every case through the living men who are given by Him to His Church in every generation.

Let the graces be added to the gifts, as taught in 1 Cor. xiii. and enforced throughout the epistles. Let no link in that golden chain of 1 Peter i. 5-7 be wanting in the assembly, and difficulties will be but preludes to victory. Every

storm that blows will serve but to teach how deeply the Church is rooted and established on its one foundation, and how, being built up according to divine revelation and pattern, it stands "not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."

Eph. iv. 1-3.

APPENDIX.

NOTE TO PAGE 38.

IT is not uncommon to find a number of passages taken from Scripture, separated from their own context, and arrayed to overthrow the doctrine that the salvation which God gives is really and truly eternal from the moment of its reception, and that it is His will that His people should be fully assured of the fact.

But God never contradicts Himself; and if He has stated "that whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life," He has certainly not said in any other part of Scripture that that life is not everlasting.

If He has declared that "Christ's sheep shall never perish," He has not said in any other part of Scripture that under certain circumstances they shall perish.

If He has told believers that they "are kept by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed," He has in no other part of Scripture stated that that power or that instrumentality shall fail.

If in Rom. viii. the Holy Spirit has not left a single being or a single possibility under God's throne unchallenged in His gracious declaration of the believer's inseparable union with his Lord, shall men be able to find a contingency which He has omitted?

But it is often said that this gift of God, eternal life, is very good in itself, but is always subject to the condition that man shall retain it by his own efforts ; that is, that though it is called by God "everlasting life," it is yet far more precarious than the life given to Adam when it was said to him, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die !" Because whereas Adam was upright when he received the command, we are fallen and sinful who receive the promise, and are liable to lose it at any moment by our unfaithfulness, and regain it as often by our repentance.

Then indeed the danger so entirely outweighs the security that assurance becomes mockery. If this were the extent of God's promises, the text should read, "I give unto them conditional life, and they shall lose it every time they sin." But as we carry sinful hearts within us, it would be of importance to know what amount of sin forfeits eternal life, and what amount of contrition regains it.

Some indeed have boldly followed this line of reasoning in its logical necessity, and classified sins into mortal and venial ; a distinction which sets aside God's word altogether ; for He says, "The thought of foolishness is sin," and, "the wages of sin is death."

The person who imagines that mortification, penance, or contrition can remit the very least shortcoming, knows nothing of the nature of sin or of the demands of righteousness. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Righteous wrath had once its full course. It was poured on one righteous Head.

The earth trembled, and the sun was darkened in presence of that terrible expiation.

Those who dare to speak of repeating that expiation now, or those who dare to say that less than such expiation can remit the smallest offence which men are pleased to call venial, know no more of the meaning of that momentous scene than the soldiers who threw dice for His garments. (See Heb. ix. 25 to end of chapter.)

And if they do not understand the power of His death, how shall they comprehend the power of His life as the last Adam? "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Ignorance of these truths makes the Bible in whole or in part incomprehensible.

Passages are taken from the perfect order and sequence in which the Holy Spirit has placed them. Dispensations are ignored by scholars who would shudder at equivalent anachronisms in profane history. Contexts are violated, and passages dragged into hostile relation between themselves, which support each other in divine perfection when left in their places.

Thus when it is sought to prove that the life of a believer, the "life which is hid with Christ in God," can be lost, such a portion of Scripture is cited as Heb. vi., which has a bearing entirely Jewish; or perhaps the second epistle of Peter, or the epistle of Jude is quoted, to the entire ignoring of their true and awful application.

This class of Scriptural warnings does not refer to believers in any condition of soul.

It is a description from God's point of view of that

which we see on every side. It speaks of those who are Christians only in name, and therefore enemies of God, and whose outward profession of worship is an abomination in His sight.

The insult of familiarly handling, day after day, the truths of Christianity without ever receiving them in the heart, is none the less heinous in God's sight, that it is complacently admitted and even encouraged by true Christians, who have so far yielded to the ways of the world, as to place communion of sect before communion of saints.

Thus, blindness to the true import of these passages helps to make the children of God accomplices in the process, by which Satan hardens the conscience of those who have nothing but a form of godliness, and finally leads them into irrecoverable apostasy, not from life, but from profession.

There is again another class of Scriptures which refers entirely to God's children, and which is either neglected, or subjected to violent misinterpretation. Far from leading to carelessness or antinomianism, the true doctrine of the assurance of everlasting life to every believer (1 John v. 13, Alford) throws full light on all those passages addressed by God to His children, wherein He expresses His amazing care and love for them. Encouragement, counsel, entreaty, warning, chastisement, death of the body, all these are brought before them to show that He does not leave them for a moment, from the time He brings them into His family.

Of this last class of warnings, perhaps the most commonly-misapplied text is 1 Cor. ix. 27, where Paul speaks of the possibility that he himself might become *αδοκιμος*. Paul is not speaking there of salvation; he

is speaking of service. To import the question of salvation into it, is to destroy the whole meaning and power of the warning. He is speaking of being crowned, not of being saved; of the possibility of losing his crown, not his everlasting life. (Compare 2 Tim. ii. 3-5; 1 Peter v. 1-4; Rev. iii. 11.) Read also the two following chapters, 1 Cor. x., xi.

The tenth chapter opens with the word "for" in the original; not "moreover," as in the authorized version. (See Alford's translation.) The word "for" announces the argument and warning to be founded on the word *αδοκιμος*. This warning is illustrated by the awful chastenings which fell on God's earthly people of old, lest they should fall to the moral level of the heathen around. The Corinthians are there solemnly charged with their own open sins against God, and in the eleventh chapter are taught that similar chastenings have fallen on the *αδοκιμοι* among themselves, even bodily sickness and death. But in verse 32, the whole scope and object of this chastening is revealed. They are chastened with bodily death by the hand of their God and Father "that they may not be *condemned with the world*."